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SHAKESPEARE AND SHORTHAND.

BY

MATTHIAS LEVY,

Author of "The History of Shorthand Writing."

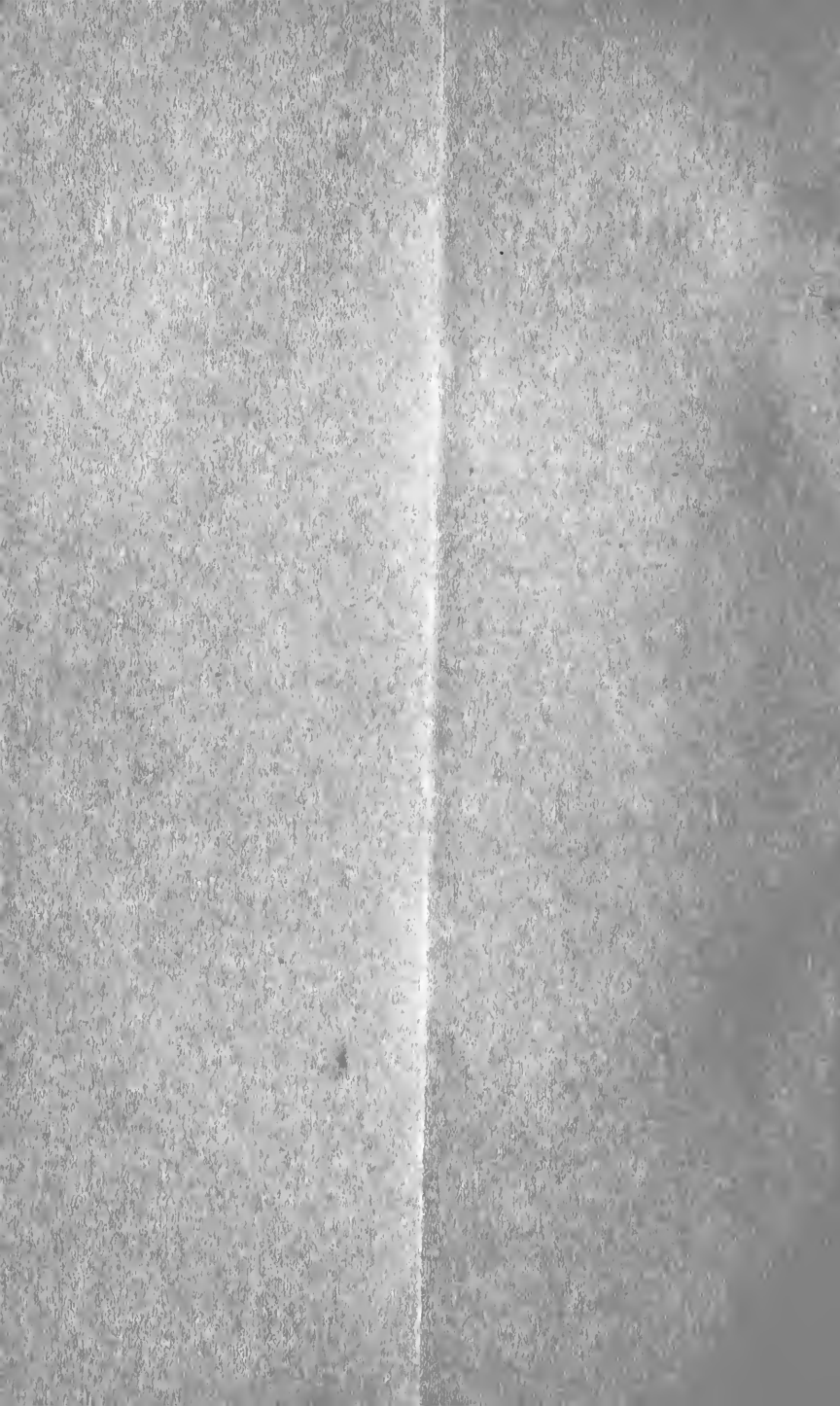
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SHAKESPEARE AND SHORTHAND.

*Read by the Author before the "Shorthand Society,"
Wednesday, May 7, 1884,*

THOMAS ALLEN REED, Esq., President, in the Chair.

IN response to the invitation of my friend, the President of the Shorthand Society, I would submit to you the following observations on the question, How much are we indebted to Shorthand for the earliest known copies of some of Shakespeare's plays?

It is desirable that we should have clearly in our minds the dates involved in the question. William Shakespeare was born in 1564 and died in 1616, and the plays to which I particularly refer are:—

1. "Hamlet."
2. "Romeo and Juliet."
3. "Henry V."
4. "The Merry Wives of Windsor."
5. "The Taming of the Shrew."

The state of Shakespeare's works has given rise to much conjecture and much criticism. Suggestions, emendations, and corrections have, as is well known, been made from time to time in regard to his plays, and the one which has probably attracted most attention is "Hamlet." For very many years the earliest known edition of "Hamlet" was the 4to of 1604. But on the title-page appear these words:—"Newly imprinted, and enlarged to almost as much again as it was, according to the true and perfect copy." This clearly proves that there must have been a previous edition: and about the year 1825 there was discovered a 4to edition of "Hamlet" bearing date 1603, and the theory has been put forward that this 1603 edition was produced from the manuscript of a Shorthand-writer, who took down the play while being acted. Many of the best known Shakesperian commentators have discussed this question, and it may be convenient here to refer to one or two opinions on the point. Mr. Dyce says:—"The 4to of 1603 exhibits a text mangled and corrupted throughout, and perhaps formed on the notes of some Shorthand-writer who had imperfectly taken it down during representation."

Mr. John Payne Collier says² that where the mechanical skill of the Shorthand-writer failed he filled in the blanks badly from memory.

Mr. Knight says:³—"It may, as Mr. Collier says, have been published in haste from a Shorthand copy taken from the mouths of the players,"

although later on he expresses doubts. He adds that the "Hamlet" of 1603 is a sketch of the perfect "Hamlet," and probably a corrupt copy of that sketch. Let us now examine for a few moments one or two of the "discrepancies."

1603 Quarto.

"A beast devoid of reason."⁴

"Why she would hang on him as if
increase
Of appetite had grown by what it
looked on."⁵

"Such changes," says Mr. Knight,⁶ "are not the work of Shorthand-writers."

"My lord, 'tis not the sable suit
I wear."⁷

"Nor the DISTRACTED 'haviour
in the visage."⁸

"Of life, of crown, of queen at
once *deprived*."⁹

"These are but wild and *whirling*
words."¹⁰

1604 Quarto.

"A beast that wants discourse of
reason."

"Why she would hang on him
As if increase of appetite had grown
By what it fed on."

"'Tis not alone my inky cloak,
good mother."

"Nor the DEJECTED 'haviour of
the visage."

"Of life, of crown, of queen at
once *dispatch'd*."

"These are but wild and *hurling*
words."

In the 1603 edition Polonius is called Corambis. Thus in Act 2, Scene 1: "Enter Polonius and Reynaldo." In the 1603 edition it is "Enter Corambis and Montano."

"Make mad the guilty and *appal* the free:"¹¹ in the 1603 edition the word "appal" is omitted.

In the soliloquy,¹² "To be or not to be," the line, "The pangs of despised love, the law's delay," is not in the 1603 quarto.

Another peculiar comparison is given. Mr. Knight reads: "I have heard of your *prattlings*, too, well enough. God hath given you one *pace*,"¹³ while Mr. Collier reads: "I have heard of your *paintings* too well enough. God hath given you one *face*."¹⁴

Mr. Collier also quotes from the 1603 edition ten lines in blank verse, which he says "is mere prose, though chopped up into apparent verse."¹⁵

These illustrations are taken haphazard with a view of showing the state of the two editions; and it is impossible, within the limits of this Paper, to do more than cursorily glance at the discrepancies between them, which are very glaring. Some scenes are transposed; others are omitted; stage directions added; the names of the characters are not the same, and many of the lines end very abruptly, bearing no comparison with those in the 4to of 1604. Another point of considerable importance is the matter of stage directions, and by way of illustration I will note here the one suggested by Mr. Collier.¹⁶ As the Ghost leaves the Queen's room, Hamlet exclaims, "My father, in his habit as he lived!" Steevens says,¹⁷ "If the poet means by this expression that his father appeared in his own familiar habit, he has either forgot that he originally introduced him in armour,

or must have meant to vary his dress at this his last appearance." When those words were written the 4to of 1603 had not been discovered; but in that 1603 edition the stage direction is—"Enter Ghost in his night-gowne." It is evident that the actor who played the Ghost was dressed in a night-gown on the occasion of the visit of the Shorthand-writer to whom we are supposed to be indebted for this 1603 edition, and that he not only took down what he heard but also what he saw. Campbell, in his edition of Shakespeare, says:—"I can entertain no doubt that it is a piratical copy, perhaps taken from the stage in Shorthand, of the real Shakespearian 'Hamlet.'"

The next play is "Romeo and Juliet," which came out in 1597.¹⁸ There is great inequality, we are told, in different scenes and speeches, and the MS. was probably made up partly from portions of the play as it was acted, but unduly obtained, and partly from notes taken in the theatre during representation. And in some places there is precisely that degree and kind of imperfectness which would belong to MS. prepared from defective Shorthand notes.

Mr. Dyce speaks of the "imperfect text" of the 4to, 1597, "nor are its imperfections merely those of a piratical edition."¹⁹

Mr. Staunton says a correct copy of the text can only be obtained by a collation of both these editions—i.e., 1597 and 1599, the 1599 being described as "augmented."²⁰

In the Critical Essay appended to "Romeo and Juliet" we are told of the 1597 4to, that it differs from later impressions; that it bears marks of haste and irregularity, and that many of its variations are due to the imperfect manner in which it found its way to the press.²¹

One illustration may here be given. In the death scene Juliet snatches Romeo's dagger, and as she stabs herself says:—

"This is thy sheath: there rest, and let me die."²²

The word "rest" appears in the 1597 quarto; but in later editions it is *rust*. Upon which Mr. Collier argues, if Shorthand were employed, *rest* and *rust* would be spelt with the same letters *rst*. That argument, however, would not avail unless an alphabetical system of Shorthand was in existence; and as we shall see later on that the first alphabet of Shorthand was not published until 1602, the quarto of 1597 could have been taken only by the inventor of that system or his private pupils (if he had any), unless, indeed, Timothy Bright's Table of Words was used.

Concerning the play of "Henry V.," this was entered on the Stationers' books August 14th, 1600, and printed the same year. There were no less than three imperfect editions of this play published—namely, 1600, 1602, and 1608. Pope says the first scene of the first act was added since 1608 by Shakespeare, the speeches generally enlarged, and whole scenes and choruses added by Shakespeare, while no perfect edition was published until 1623 (the first folio). Malone says Shakespeare did not add after

1608, and he seeks to prove this by reference to the Chorus to the Fifth Act, which must have been written in 1599. "The fair inference to be drawn (says Malone)²³ from the imperfect and mutilated copies of this play, published in 1600, 1602, and 1608, is not that the whole play as we now have it did not then exist, but that those copies were surreptitious, and that the editor, not being able to publish the whole, published what he could." And in his introduction to this play he says:²⁴—"It not unfrequently happened that the person who took down the lines as the actor delivered them for the purpose of publishing the quarto, 1600, misread what was said, and used wrong words which in sound nearly resembled the right." Malone also says:—"It should be observed that supposing these copies to have been made out by the *ear* (which there is great reason to believe was the case), the transcriber might easily have been deceived."²⁵

Mr. Phelps, in his edition of Shakespeare, says in his introduction to "Henry V.":—"A careful comparison of the two versions would appear conclusively to show that the first was a spurious publication derived from the imperfect Shorthand notes taken down during the representation."²⁶

With regard to the "Merry Wives of Windsor," Collier says "it had come out in a very imperfect state in 1602;" "it has been generally admitted that the 4to of 1602 was piratical," and he is of opinion that it was made up "partly from notes taken at the theatre and partly from memory," like the first edition of "Henry V."²⁷

"I scarcely entertain a doubt that the quarto of 1602 is a surreptitious, much mutilated, and very inaccurate text of the author's (Shakespeare's) first sketch of 'the play,' as originally performed both before Her Majesty and elsewhere."²⁸ The quarto of 1602 has been described as "a rough draught and not a mutilated copy," and also as a copy "which was imperfectly taken down during representation."²⁹

Mr. Staunton, Mr. Halliwell, and Mr. Knight take a somewhat different view. There is a tradition that Elizabeth was so delighted with the Falstaff in "Henry IV." "that she commanded a play to be written in which the Knight should be exhibited alone . . . and she directed it should be finished in sixteen days. This would account for the evidences of haste and discrepancies."

As to the "Taming of the Shrew" the date is doubtful, and requires a more detailed examination than it is possible to give to it within the limits of the present Paper. In *Notes and Queries*, 1st Series, vol. viii., p. 74, mention is made³⁰ of a 4to "which came out some years before the folio 1623." Mr. Collier, in his edition of Shakespeare, speaks of three quartos³¹—one at Cambridge, with the imprint 1631, a second without any imprint (this is in the British Museum), and a third in the hands of Mr. Collier himself, with a memorandum: "1607 (or 1609) stayed by the author." I do not lay much stress on this, but simply give the references for any one who may desire further to investigate the matter.³²

I may here incidentally mention a passage from "Henry IV.," Part I. :—
 "No more the thirsty entrance of this soil," which Steevens suggests might
 be read "entrants"—*i.e.*, those who set foot on this kingdom.³³

It should be remembered that in Shakespeare's time there was a desire to prevent people becoming acquainted with plays that were produced, except by representation on the stage. It must also be recollected that although Shakespeare's plays created a great impression at the period of their performance they were not regarded with that veneration that is now entertained for them. Nevertheless they were popular, and, we must assume, understood by the audience. The printers and publishers, eager to satisfy an eager public, were early in the field with their surreptitious editions, and it may fairly be assumed that Shorthand has played a part in the production of some of the editions of the plays of Shakespeare. We shall see this illustrated presently by reference to contemporary dramatists, some of whom have left on record complaints of their treatment by "Stenographers." Plays were taken down in Shorthand first and then copied into fair Longhand; that it was the practice to do so at this period is beyond doubt. Surreptitious, piratical, and imperfect copies of various plays are known, printed without authority, and palmed off upon an unsuspecting public as the genuine productions of great genius. In accounting for discrepancies we must remember that actors interpolate words and ideas of their own. Blank verse, declaimed with fine effect, might be turned into prose, halting lines, or broken lines, by even a skilled Shorthand-writer using the best system known; and the text of a play taken down accurately and transcribed correctly would possibly differ materially from the original MS. of the author.

Having indicated the opinions of some of the most celebrated Shakespearean commentators that the earliest editions of some of the plays were surreptitiously printed, and that the means adopted were Shorthand notes taken while the plays were actually being performed, let us now turn to the second branch of the question and consider what was the state of Shorthand at the time Shakespeare lived and wrote.

Again it is desirable to remember dates, 1564—1616, the years of Shakespeare's birth and death. Within that period only three systems of Shorthand were known. I use the words "systems of Shorthand" for convenience only. The first is Timothy Bright, who published in 1588 a treatise called "Characterie, an Art of Short, Swift, and Secret Writing by Character." There was no alphabet, but there was a Table of Words with characters annexed, which (said the author) "thou art to get by heart." We are told³⁴ that "it required such understanding and memory that few of the ordinary sort of people could attain to the knowledge thereof." The author himself says in his preface :—"He had invented the like of few characters, short and easy, *every character answering a word.*"

If I mention here, in order of date, Peter Bales, it is to avoid rather

than raise controversy. So again:—"The Order of Orthography—The Key of Caligraphy." Published 1590. T. Orwin. My own opinion is that this was "secret" as distinguished from "Shorthand" writing. I am aware that in "The Art of Brachygraphie" we find this passage:—"For by the means and help thereof (they which know it) can readily take a sermon, oration, play, or any long speech." But, on the other hand, all his biographers agree in saying that he was a writing-master, and that he invented a *secret* writing. A specimen of Bales's so-called system is given in the "Biographia Britannica," 2nd edition.³⁵ It consisted of eight lines placed in horizontal, perpendicular, and diagonal positions:—"The method adopted by Bales was to divide the words into dozens, each dozen headed by a Roman letter, and every word in the twelve distinguished from the rest by a comma placed in its appropriate situation."³⁶ Fac-similes have appeared in the magazine published under the auspices of this Society, entitled "SHORTHAND." Mr. Cornelius Walford and Dr. Westby-Gibson have discussed this question of Peter Bales, and it cannot be in better hands. Speaking of the old systems before 1588 Dr. Gibson says "they are useless for swift writing, ambiguous for transcription" (vol. i., p. 75, "SHORTHAND"); and the point concerning the "Latin" notes I will leave, without any disrespect, to be settled by Mr. Anderson and Dr. Gibson. At page 80 there is "a more complete list" given; but, with great deference to the compiler of that list, it seems to confirm my own view that there were several "secret" systems, but not Shorthand. "Cryptographie" is the word used, and that is not Stenography.³⁷

Up to this point no alphabetic system had been published, and it was not until 1602 that a book with the following title appeared:—"The Art of Stenography or Short Writing by Spelling Characterie. Invented by John Willis, Batchelour in Divinitie." The first edition is not known, I believe, but the tenth bears this imprint:—"London: Printed for *Henry Seyle*, and are to be sold at the Tyger's Head in *Saint Pauls Churchyard*, 1632." In the preface he says:—"It is now about 30 years since this art of Stenography (being the first book of Spelling characterie that was ever set forth) was first published," thus showing the first edition was published about 1602.

Now this being the first system of Shorthand that contained characters for letters, I may perhaps be permitted to read here what I have already written, describing the system of John Willis, 1602:—"33

"The commencement of the first chapter of the book is curious as affording an illustration of the author's opinion of Shorthand. Stenography (he says) is the art of compendious writing, wherein we are first to consider the general abbreviation of all words, and then the particular abbreviation of some. In the general abbreviation of all words two things are to be observed—first, what letters in every word are to be omitted; secondly, how the needful letters of every word ought to be expressed, the great

object being, in the first instance, abbreviation, and in the next the formation of the characters. He then proceeds to give certain rules with regard to the omission of letters, and concludes the chapter with a list of words containing certain consonants which may be omitted. For instance, he says the letter B may be omitted in *debt*, *lamb*, *subtle*, and all words wherein this consonant is not sounded. In the next chapter we have his alphabet with the letter C omitted, because it has no sound of its own, being always pronounced as *K* or *S*. Also the letters *ph* (*f*), and numerous others, which, be it distinctly understood, is the rule adopted at the present day. And he concludes the chapter with this important and true observation—true because it has been practically carried into effect by succeeding generations :—‘It is to be observed that this art prescribeth the writing of words, not according to their orthography as they are written, but according to their sound as they are pronounced, observing their pronunciation in the shortest manner ;’ and the paragraph concludes with some examples illustrating the above observation. The succeeding nine chapters describe how words of one, two, three, and more syllables are to be written, and certain rules are laid down for the guidance of the student. The 12th chapter is, ‘on combination,’ which is ‘a small character into which two or three letters are contracted.’ This has been reduced in modern times to the arbitrary character, such as the termination of words, *ble*, *dle*, *nie*, *tie*, &c., &c. If we now give the heads of the succeeding chapters the reader will comprehend the intricacy of the system. ‘Of usual terminations.’ ‘Of collaterals.’ ‘Of the words of sort.’ This is the 15th chapter, and as the rules laid down here are not in general use a short description of ‘words of sort’ may prove interesting. These ‘words’ are a modification of Bright’s Table, which has been already referred to. There are a great many words, and the author was evidently under the impression that the whole of these could never be remembered. For he says, ‘If any person shall think the number of them too many he may practise as few of them as he pleaseth, and write the rest of the words at large.’ The object of the ‘words’ is to accelerate writing ; but I am inclined to think it would be a very complicated system if it were practically used. The ‘words’ are divided into ten sorts, of which nine are called ‘defectives,’ while the 10th Table or ‘sort’ is termed symbolical, so called ‘because the figure of the character hath some agreement with the signification of the word which it standeth for, as being a symbol thereof.’ Then follow the ten tables or sorts. A few instances may be acceptable :—

<i>A</i>	—	a	—	among	} First Sort.
<i>F</i>	—	c	—	come	
<i>Z</i>	—	z	—	zion	

“In the third sort the characters are dropped and the alphabet substituted thus :—

A	—	also
A	—	affect
N	—	number
O	—	obeyed

"Words of the tenth sort are called symbolicals, and the invention of them is certainly ingenious. The sun is represented by a circle with a dot in it. The moon by a semicircle, the heart by the shape of a heart. The world by a circle and curves, and many others which exhibit great tact. The author then proceeds to consider the beginning of words, *em, im, in, en*, to which he devotes a short chapter; this is followed by a table of combinations, and the book concludes with some 'rules for speed in writing,' which form the 18th and last chapter of the book.

"Attached to this work is another by the same author, entitled 'The Schoolmaster to the Art of Stenography, 1628.' The object of it is explained in the preface:—"I have framed the book dialoguewise," says Mr. Willis, "as a speech between the master and scholar, that I might the more orderly and briefly propound and answer all doubts, which I did conceive might come into the mind of a learner to ask, making every chapter of this dialogic to answer every chapter of the book of Stenography, that both may be the better compared together."

"From the above extract it will be seen that the 'Schoolmaster, &c.,' is in fact a repetition of the book itself, the instruction being conveyed by a schoolmaster to a pupil who is supposed to ask certain questions. It is unnecessary, therefore, to enter into any detail of this book; and I may dispose of it with the following extract, showing the purposes to which Shorthand may be put, premising that the observation was written about the year 1620. The author is speaking of the art of Shorthand:—"Now this manner of writing taking up so narrow a room must needs be very profitable; first, for writing marginal notes and interlineations where they are needful; secondly, for noting sermons, reports, orations, or any speech; thirdly, for speedy writing out of anything, whereof we desire to have a copy; and fourthly, for the penning of any set speech which is to be delivered in public." These are the profitable uses to which Shorthand may be applied.

"The book went through fourteen editions, notwithstanding the immense number of words to be learnt; proving, beyond all doubt, the utility of Shorthand-writing to all classes."

Two years after Shakespeare's death—namely, in 1618—there was published "An Abbreviation of writing by Character wherein is summarily contained a Table which is an Abstract of the whole Art. With plaine and easie rules for the speedy performance thereof without any other Tutor. By Edmond Willis." Of this system also I have given a description, which I will here read:—³⁹

"The title-page, as will be seen, is very high-sounding; but, on a perusal of the book, we find it contains the same systems as those already referred to. The first thing that strikes one is a table of 200 words to be 'got by heart,' the accomplishment of which opens the way to further difficulties. There is a list of 'Double Consonants' and 'Beginning of Words;' 'A List

of Terminations for Endings of Words; 'Prepositions for the Beginning of Long Words;' and 'Terminations for Long Words of Many Syllables.' To these may be added a very intricate system of placing the vowels. A is to be placed directly over a letter; E, even with the head of the letter; I, on the right-hand side of the letter; O, even with the foot of the letter; and the place of U is directly under the foot of the letter. Then we are treated to a very elaborate discourse on diphthongs, and how they are to be placed: with a number of details, which would occupy a very considerable time in learning. The characters themselves are difficult to write, while the joining of them leads to great confusion; the cause of which is the vowels are written at full length and form part of the word.

"The most curious part of the book, however, is the preface, from which we discover an interesting fact. I quote from the second edition. 'After my Three-and-twenty years' experience in this Art, looking both upon myself and others, and finding much gain and benefit returnable this way, by taking sermons and speeches VERBATIM, and that all former authors that wrote anything of this subject are now gone off the stage of this life, and their works almost perished, I thought it my duty to quicken again this Art,' &c., &c.; and then he enters into a description of his first edition, and gives his reasons for publishing this one. But it will be observed that as early as 1627 Shorthand had shaped itself into a profession, 'much gain and benefit' having been obtained by Edmond Willis by taking sermons and speeches; so that, although Shorthand was comparatively only a new discovery, the ordinary laws of commerce were applied to it.

"The author appears to have been a man of property, and following some other business; for he says, in another part of the preface, 'For mine own part, I have not herein cunningly concealed any part of my skill, as if my intention were to dupe disciples after me for further instructions, and so to advance my fortunes that way—for I thank God my other calling whereto I give attendance doth (by God's Blessing) furnish me with an estate sufficiently suitable to the moderation of my desires.' Although he was not, as it appears, totally dependent on Shorthand for a living, it seems to have brought him 'much gain and benefit;' and he gives this book to the world, in order that others may do likewise. The preface is exceedingly long, and abounds with 'Thanks to God' for the Author's affluent position; and he concludes by 'commending these directions, in all humble submission, to thy favourable acceptance, and thyself with them to the gracious blessing of our God, whose characters we are all.'"

The preface to the second edition was written in 1627; and he says, "After my twenty-three years' experience in this Art," and so on, which would take us back to 1604, contemporary with Shakespeare. Thus, although Edmond Willis did not publish his work until two years after Shakespeare's death, yet the system was known and was being used for many years previously.

The next system was by Henry Dix, third edition, 1641. But this carries us a long way on: twenty-five years after Shakespeare's death, eighteen years after the first folio, and nine years after the second folio.

These are all the systems of Shorthand that can be said to be contemporary with Shakespeare. Could plays be taken down by means of those systems? The inclination of my opinion is that they could; and that is a cause of some of the errors and discrepancies of which we hear so much. But the Shorthand-writer was surrounded by difficulties. An actor declaiming blank verse, although he may give an indication of stops—that is to say, pauses—for punctuation, would not help the note-taker on the subject of blank verse. He would not know any more than we should at the present day where the line ended or where it began. One might easily test it by taking down in Shorthand at the Lyceum Theatre “Harold” or “Queen Mary” or other dramas of Tennyson. In making the transcript the lines would of necessity be different, and any print from our MS. would vary from the authorised edition. But what were the conditions under which the Shorthand-writer would take notes in a theatre, say about the year 1600? Here is the description:—“Our old public theatres were merely wooden buildings, generally round, open to the sky in the audience part of the house, although the stage was covered by a hanging roof. The spectators stood on the ground in front or at the sides, or were accommodated in boxes round the inner circumference of the edifice, or in galleries at a greater elevation.”⁴⁰ And what was the condition of writing? This is one of the processes for making corrections:—“By writing down the consonants or principal letters of the doubted word, and guessing what the word ought to be, for at that period (sixteenth century), words were abbreviated by the omission of many of the vowels, as in *p r n z*, which, being extended, might be read “prinzie” or “princely.” Again as to faulty pronunciation. “’Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,” was misprinted in the edition of 1611 “’Tis not alone my inky cloake *could* smother!”⁴¹

Having discussed the unauthorised editions of Shakespeare's plays, having considered the state of Shorthand-writing, let us now see if any light can be thrown on the relations between dramatists and Shorthand-writers at the close of the sixteenth and commencement of the seventeenth centuries. It is well known that dramatic authors of that date complained bitterly of the treatment to which they were subjected in this respect. Marston, in his Preface to the “Malecontent,” 1604, says:⁴²—“Only one thing afflicts me: to think that scenes, invented merely to be spoken, should be inforcibly published to be read, and that the least hurt I can receive is to do myself the wrong. . . . I have myself, therefore, set forth this comedy,” and so on.

Again, from the 1623 folio:⁴³—“You were abused with divers stolen and surreptitious copies, maimed and deformed by the frauds and stealths

of injurious impostors that exposed them, even these are now offered to your view cured and perfect of their limbs, and all the rest absolute in their numbers as he conceived them."

Thomas Heywood, the dramatist, was a contemporary of Shakespeare. In 1608 he wrote:—"Though some have used a double sale of their labours to the stage and after to the press, for my own part I here proclaim myself ever faithful to the first and never guilty of the last, yet since some of my plays have (unknown to me and without any of my direction) accidentally come into the printers' hands, and therefore so corrupt and mangled (copied only by the ear) that I have been as unable to know them as ashamed to challenge them."⁴⁴

Heywood had written for the stage in 1596, and in the Introduction to "The Fair Maid of the West" Mr. Collier says:—"No author of the time has more reason to complain of the pirating and surreptitious printing of his works" (than Heywood). "He himself elsewhere more than once makes it a matter of formal remonstrance."

That "formal remonstrance" is to be found in "Pleasant Dialogues and Dramas," by Thomas Heywood, London, 1637. In the part entitled Prologues and Epilogues, page 248 there is a prologue to his play "Queen Elizabeth" (the other title by which it is known is "If you know not me you know nobody"). This play was first published in 1606, and I should gather must have been a great success. Subsequently Heywood wrote a prologue, in which he says they

"Did throng the seats, the boxes, and the stage,
So much, that some by Stenography drew
The plot: put it in print: scarce one word true."

Several editions of the play of "Queen Elizabeth" were published.

Another illustration of the early use of Shorthand is to be found in the play called "The Devil's Law Case," by John Webster, published in 1623. In Act 4, Scene 3, Sanitonella says:—

"Do you hear, officers?
You must take great care that you let in
No brachygraphy-men to take notes."

The Rev. Mr. Dyce's note on the above passage is:—"Brachygraphy—*i.e.*, Shorthand-writers—no great favourites of our old dramatists, who had sometimes to complain of their plays being printed without their consent in a mutilated state, from copies taken down by brachygraphy during the representation." ["The Works of John Webster," 1857, page 131.]

Now upon all this Mr. Collier says:—"We cannot wonder at the errors in plays surreptitiously procured and hastily printed, which was the case with many impressions of that day. . . . Other dramatists make the same complaint, and there can be no doubt that it was the practice so to defraud

authors and actors, and to palm wretchedly disfigured pieces upon the public as genuine and authentic works. It was, we are satisfied, in this way that 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Henry V.,' and 'Hamlet' first got out into the world."⁴⁵

At a later period (1649) "A Bartholomew Fairing" was published, in which we read—"Ralph Shorthand! . . . My Stenographical Sermon Catcher," &c. &c. For this reference I am indebted to the Magazine published by this Society.⁴⁶

It is also curious and worthy of remark that later Shorthand authors commend Stenography as being useful for taking down (among other things) plays.⁴⁷

This question of the text of Shakespeare's plays is of the utmost importance from a literary point of view, and it is a subject that may well occupy the time and attention of this Society. The folio editions are said to be founded on the quartos. Whence came those quartos, and from what MS. were they printed? That Shorthand was used in and about the time of Shakespeare can scarcely be doubted. Dr. Ingleby says we have no authoritative text at all,⁴⁸ and that correctors, transcribers, and compositors have been much too ready to alter whatever they were unable to understand.⁴⁹

In 1811—1812 Samuel Taylor Coleridge delivered in the Scots Corporation Hall, Crane-court, Fleet-street, a series of lectures on Shakespeare and Milton, and in 1856 the following work was published. I give the full title:—"Seven Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton. By the late S. T. Coleridge. A list of all the MS. Emendations in Mr. Collier's Folio, 1632. And an Introductory Preface by J. Payne Collier, Esq." The interest for the student of Shorthand literature centres in the preface. At page 2 there is a long affidavit set out, which Mr. Collier made in reference to a pamphlet called "Literary Cookery." According to paragraph 5 Mr. Collier attended each of a course of fifteen lectures given by Coleridge, and took in pencil Shorthand notes of the same. Those notes he laid aside, and was unable to find any of them until the year 1854. He made transcripts and destroyed the original notes except two, which are exhibited to the affidavit and marked G and H. The lectures are as nearly as possible transcripts of his own Shorthand notes taken at the close of the year 1811 and the spring of 1812. "My father taught me," he says,⁵⁰ "at an early age the use of abbreviated characters, and I hardly know any species of instruction that in after life has stood me in greater stead." And farther on he says:⁵¹—"Knowing the great advantages of Shorthand I say this . . . with a view to induce fathers of families to have their children taught Stenography with as much diligence as they are now instructed in any other branch of knowledge." He describes his Shorthand books as "sheets of paper stitched together,"⁵² and his notes remained undeciphered from 1812 to 1854—a period of forty-two years. He adds that "a few

defects may be attributed to the inconvenience of my position"⁵³—that is, in taking down the notes. Speaking of the surreptitious copies of early dramas, he says⁵⁴ that individuals were frequently employed to take down the words in Shorthand as they heard them delivered on the stage. . . . Hence, too, the constant confusion between verse and prose noticeable in the printed productions of Shakespeare and of all his contemporaries, for those who took Shorthand notes did not distinguish the one from the other in the haste of delivery or transcription. Another set of errors arose out of the use of Shorthand.⁵⁵ In every Shorthand as few letters as possible are employed, consequently the vowels are usually altogether omitted, and only indicated in case of necessity. Thus many words meaning very different things being spelt with the same consonants might be and very often were mistaken for each other. In "Macbeth"⁵⁶ there is this sentence:—

"The time has been my senses would have *cool'd*
To hear a night shriek."

For *cool'd* read *quail'd*. The blunder, no doubt, says Mr. Collier, in a foot-note, arose from the fact that this part of the play, as printed, was originally taken down in Shorthand, and that the same letters *khl* spelt *quail'd* and *cool'd*. It is right here to say that "Macbeth" was first printed in the folio of 1623, and it is an ascertained fact that it was represented at the Globe Theatre 20 April, 1610. The emendation is to be found in the corrected folio of 1632. A great number of instances of this character, but not from Shakespeare, are given. I will quote four of them as amusing curiosities that will, no doubt, be appreciated by every Shorthand-writer. In Beaumont and Fletcher's "Pilgrim," Act IV., Scene 3:—

"I dizen'd him
And pinn'd a *plum* in 's forehead."

Plum puzzled many people.⁵⁷ "It must be the name of a cap," said one. "The authors intended to write nonsense," said another. "No," says Collier, "the Shorthand-writer, finding the letters p l m in his notes, hastily concluded, without thinking of the sense, that it meant *plum*, instead of *plume*. 'Pinn'd a plume (feather) in his forehead.'"

In "The Woman's Prize," by Beaumont and Fletcher, Act IV., Scene 3:—

"*Bianco*.—You're an ass.
You must have all things construed.
Tranio.—And *piere'd* too."

In Shorthand *c* and *s* are alike, hence *prsd*, which should be *parsd*.

As an instance of mishearing, in "The Island Princess" (Beaumont and Fletcher) we read, "We are all mere martins." The word "*martins*" puzzled the editors, but, says Mr. Collier, it is a mishearing, and should be *martyrs*.

In Heywood's "Fair Maid of the Exchange" we read as prose, "If

time and place were in *prosperity*, I were yours for an hour's society." *Prosperity* should be *propriety*, and it would rhyme—

“ If time and place were in propriety,
I were yours for an hour's society.”

Because, says Mr. Collier, “ in the Shorthand I write *prosperity* and *propriety* look very much alike, and probably it was so with the Shorthand written by the person who took notes of Heywood's comedy.”⁵⁸

I will only refer very briefly to the famous Perkins folio, 1632, with its MS. notes—(1) because it gave rise to a bitter controversy and painful discussion; (2) because I do not wish to quote myself unnecessarily. The book was full of MS. notes in the handwriting of the time. Doubts were cast on the genuineness and authenticity of the writing. As I have said, a bitter controversy arose, and there was a warfare of letters and pamphlets. We are to-day only concerned with four Shorthand words which were found in the margin of a particular page. The play was “*Coriolanus*,” Act V., Scene 2. There are, at this point, several persons on the stage, and Menenius says, “Nay, but fellow, fellow!” and here were found the four Shorthand words which I discovered to mean a stage direction: “*Struggles, or iustead noise.*” They are, as I believe, written in the system of John Palmer, published in 1774, which was described as an improvement upon Mr. Byrom's Universal English Shorthand.⁵⁹

In preparing this Paper I have endeavoured to collect what has been written on the subject of Shakespeare and Shorthand. There is very much to be said on the subject: and my object has been to indicate to those who are interested in the matter the road along which they may travel. If my words help towards the settlement of the question as to the text of Shakespeare I shall be well content.

NOTES.

- ¹ Dyce's Shakespeare, Introduction to "Hamlet," p. 101.
- ² Collier's Shakespeare, Introduction to "Hamlet," p. 469, vol. v.
- ³ Knight's Shakespeare, Introduction to "Hamlet," p. 4.
- ⁴ "Hamlet," Act I., sc. 2.
- ⁵ Ibid, Act I., sc. 2.
- ⁶ Knight's Shakespeare, Introduction to "Hamlet."
- ⁷ "Hamlet," Act I., sc. 2.
- ⁸ Ibid, Act I., sc. 2.
- ⁹ Ibid, Act I., sc. 5 (Collier).
- ¹⁰ Ibid, Act I., sc. 5 (Collier): compare folio Shakespeare and Knight's Shakespeare.
- ¹¹ "Hamlet," Act II., sc. 2 (Collier).
- ¹² Ibid, Act III., sc. 1.
- ¹³ Ibid, Act III., sc. 1.
- ¹⁴ Compare Knight's Shakespeare.
- ¹⁵ Collier's Shakespeare, "Hamlet," pp. 563-7 (note).
- ¹⁶ "Hamlet," Act III., sc. 4.
- ¹⁷ Malone's Shakespeare, vol. vii., p. 399.
- ¹⁸ Collier's Shakespeare, Introduction to "Romeo and Juliet," pp. 94-5.
- ¹⁹ Dyce, Introduction to "Romeo and Juliet," p. 389.
- ²⁰ Staunton, Preliminary Notice to "Romeo and Juliet."
- ²¹ Singer's Shakespeare, vol. viii., p. 253.
- ²² "Romeo and Juliet," Act V., sc. 3.
- ²³ Malone edition, 1790—"An attempt," &c.
- ²⁴ Malone, Introduction to Henry V., p. 463.
- ²⁵ Malone edition Shakespeare, 1790, vol. v., p. 110, note. Also vol. i., part i., Prolegomana, p. 320—"An attempt to ascertain the order," &c.
- ²⁶ Phelps' Shakespeare, p. 39, vol. ii.
- ²⁷ Collier, Introduction to "Merry Wives," vol. i., p. 165.
- ²⁸ Dyce, vol. i., p. 343.
- ²⁹ Malone—"An attempt to ascertain the order in which the plays of Shakespeare were written," vol. ii., p. 375, note by Boswell. See also Staunton's Shakespeare, vol. ii., p. 94.
- ³⁰ J. P. Collier.
- ³¹ Collier's Shakespeare, ed. 1858, vol. ii., p. 437.
- ³² See also Malone, "An attempt," &c., vol. ii., p. 340.
- ³³ Malone, note on the word "entrance" or "entrants," Act I., sc. i.
- ³⁴ John Willis.
- ³⁵ Edited by Dr. Andrew Kippis, 1778.
- ³⁶ "The Order of Orthography—The Key of Caligraphy," 1590, T. Orwin. See also Lowndes' "Bibliographers' Manual," Art. "Bales:?" and Dr. Bliss's

edition of Wood's *Athen. Oxon.*, vol. i., pp. 655—7; Holinshed's "Chronicle," and John Bagford's "Collected Materials for a History of Printing." Bagford's MS. volumes are in the Harleian and Lansdowne Collections in the British Museum.

³⁷ "Shorthand," a quarterly magazine, vol. i., p. 87.

³⁸ See my "History of Shorthand Writing," London, 1862, p. 16.

³⁹ My "History of Shorthand Writing," p. 26.

⁴⁰ Collier's *Shakespeare*, vol. i., p. 37, ed. 1858. See also Staunton's *Shakespeare*, 4 vols., 1864, vol. i., p. xxvii. J. P. Collier's *History of English Dramatic Poetry*, London, 1879, a new edition, 3 vols.

⁴¹ A Review of the present state of the Shakesperian Controversy, by Sir Thomas Duffus Hardy, London, 1860, p. 17.

⁴² "The Malcontent," by John Marston, 1604, "To the Reader."

⁴³ Address to the Reader, *Shakespeare*, folio, 1623.

⁴⁴ "Rape of Lucrece," "To the Reader," 1608. See also "Apology for Actors," by Thomas Heywood.

⁴⁵ Life of Shakespeare in *Shakespeare's works*, vol. i., p. 142, note.

⁴⁶ "Shorthand," vol. i., p. 50, note.

⁴⁷ "Weston's New Shorthand Grammar," 1747; My "History of Shorthand," p. 67.

⁴⁸ *Shakespeare Controversy*, London, 1861, p. 19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁵⁰ *Seven Lectures, &c.*, preface, p. 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, preface, p. 6.

⁵² *Ibid.*, preface, p. 11.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, preface, p. 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, preface, p. 88.

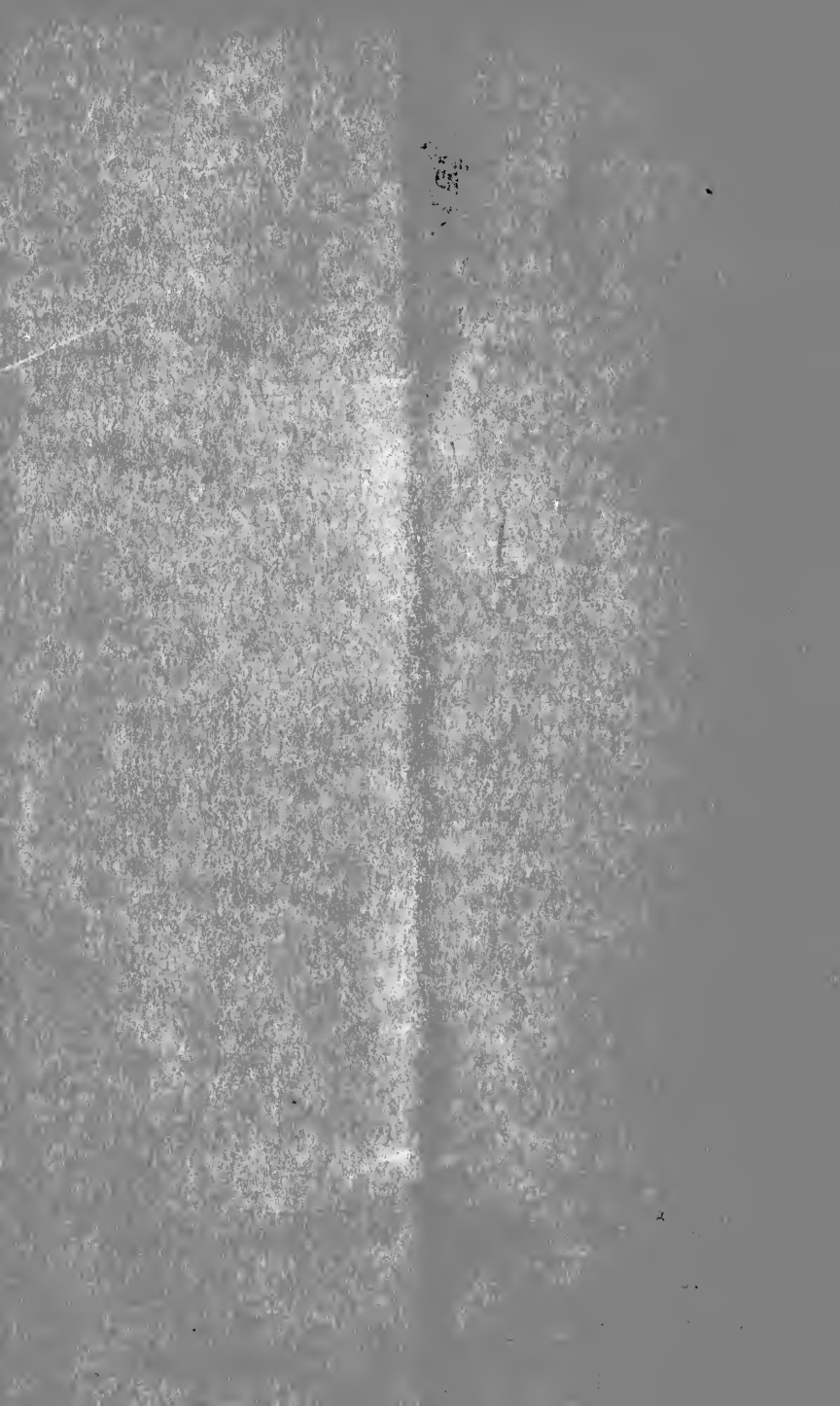
⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.

⁵⁶ "Macbeth," Act V., sc. v.

⁵⁷ Dyce.

⁵⁸ A new edition of the *Seven Lectures* was published in 1883.

⁵⁹ "Literary Gazette," 17th March, 1860; "Critic," 2nd, 9th, 16th June, 1860.





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